

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 240811Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4953

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 14711

THE FOLLOWING TELEGRAM WAS SENT 23 MAY 78 FM AMCONSUL CHIANG
MAI TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK AND IS REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION/
INFO:

QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L CHIANG MAI 197

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, EAID, TH
SUBJECT: RTG ATTACK ON INSURGENT CAMP IN MAE CHAM DISTRICT

REF: CHIANG MAI A-006, MAY 26, 1977

SUMMARY: AS REPORTED IN THE PRESS, DISTRICT OFFICIALS IN MAE
CHAM DISTRICT, CHIANG MAI PROVINCE, ATTACKED A SMALL
COMMUNIST INSURGENT CAMP ON MAY 16TH. THEY KILLED ONE
INSURGENT AND CAPTURED WEAPONS, AMMUNITION, AND DOCUMENTS.
THE DOCUMENTS SUGGESTS THAT SOME OF THE INSURGENTS WERE
EX-STUDENTS WHO FLED INTO THE JUNGLE IN OCTOBER 1976. WHILE
MAE CHAM MUST NOW BE CONSIDERED AN AREA WHERE INSURGENTS
ARE OPERATING, I DO NOT BELIEVE THE DANGER IS SO GREAT
AS TO FORCE CHANGES IN PLANNED U.S. SUPPORT FOR HIGHLAND
DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN THE AREA. END SUMMARY

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1. CONSULATE SOURCES HAVE CONFIRMED PRESS REPORTS OF A CLASH
BETWEEN INSURGENTS AND DISTRICT OFFICIALS IN MAE CHAM DISTRICT,
IN CHIANG MAI PROVINCE.
2. THE PROVINCIAL POLICE COMMANDER TOLD A CONSULATE FSL THAT
LOCAL VILLAGERS REPORTED TO THE MAE CHAM DISTRICT OFFICER ON
MAY 16, THAT A GROUP OF "STUDENT" INSURGENTS WERE CAMPED

IN AN AREA ABOUT EIGHT KILOMETERS FROM THE DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS. THE DISTRICT OFFICER LEAD A SMALL FORCE OF POLICEMEN INTO THE AREA ON THE SAME DAY. THEY DISCOVERED A SMALL INSURGENT CAMP AND ATTEMPTED TO ARREST TWO YOUNG PEOPLE STANDING OUTSIDE ONE OF THE TENTS. THOSE TWO RESISTED ARREST, THE POLICE FIRED AND OTHER INSURGENTS INSIDE THE CAMP STARTED SHOOTING AT THE POLICE AND THE DISTRICT OFFICER.

3. WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARED, ONE OF THE INSURGENTS WAS DEAD AND THE REST HAD FLED. HOWEVER, THAI OFFICIALS ARE CONVINCED THEY WOUNDED SOME OF THE OTHERS. THE THAI OFFICIALS SUFFERED NO CASUALTIES, BUT ONE POLICEMAN, WHO TRIED TO CIRCLE AROUND BEHIND THE INSURGENTS, GOT LOST IN THE FOREST AND DIDN'T SHOW UP UNTIL THE NEXT DAY. (OBVIOUSLY, NO ONE ON EITHER SIDE HAD MUCH, IF ANY, EXPERIENCE IN JUNGLE WARFARE.)

4. THE DISTRICT OFFICIALS DISCOVERED A CACHE OF WEAPONS, AMMUNITION, AND DOCUMENTS INSIDE THE CAMP INCLUDING TEN M16 RIFLES, TWENTY-EIGHT BOOBY TRAPS, TWO HAND GRANADES, AND A PISTOL. THE PROVINCIAL POLICE CHIEF TOLD US THEY ALSO DISCOVERED AN UNMAILED LETTER THAT APPARENTLY HAD BEEN WRITTEN BY AN EX-MEDICAL STUDENT IN THE CAMP TO A MEDICAL STUDENT STILL STUDYING AT CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY. (A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF THE STUDENTS WHO FLED CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY IN OCTOBER 1976 WERE FROM THE MEDICAL
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FACULTY.)

5. EXTRA POLICE FORCES WERE MOVED INTO MAE CHAM FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT, AND A SPECIAL OPERATION FORCE IS SUPPOSED TO GO INTO THE DISTRICT THIS WEEK.

6. THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS THAT A SMALL GROUP OF COMMUNIST INSURGENTS WAS OPERATING IN THE AREA BETWEEN MAE CHAM AND MAE SARIANG DISTRICT IN MAE HONG SON PROVINCE FOR OVER A YEAR NOW. THIS GROUP IS USUALLY DESCRIBED AS A COLLECTION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WHO ARE TRYING TO INDOCTRINATE LOCAL KAREN AND MAO HILLSTRIBE PEOPLE LIVING IN THE AREA.

7. THE RTG RAN A SMALL JOINT ISOC/BPP OPERATION IN THE AREA LAST MAY AND CAPTURED THREE SUSPECTS. HOWEVER, NONE OF THE SUSPECTS WERE EX UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. THE INFORMATION OBTAINED AS A RESULT OF THIS RECENT CLASH APPEARS TO CONFIRM THAT AT LEAST SOME OF THE INSURGENTS IN MAE CHAM ARE EX STUDENTS THAT FLED INTO THE JUNGLE IN OCTOBER 1976.

8. THE CLASH AND THE NUMBER OF WEAPONS CAPTURED HAS BEEN GIVEN HEAVY PRESS PLAY HERE IN CHIANG MAI AS WELL AS IN BANGKOK. THE INCIDENT HAS FOCUSED LOCAL ATTENTION ON THE FACT THAT CHIANG MAI PROVINCE CAN NO LONGER BE CONSIDERED TO BE COMPLETELY FREE OF THE COMMUNIST INSURGENCY. AT THE SAME TIME, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS SMALL GROUP OF INSURGENTS REPRESENTS ANY SERIOUS THREAT TO THE GOVERNMENT OR THE SECURITY OF THE AREA. IT APPEARS THAT THE INSURGENTS ARE HAVING A GREAT DEAL OF TROUBLE IN FINDING ANY POPULAR SUPPORT AS IS EVIDENCED BY THE FACT THAT LOCAL VILLAGERS PROVIDED THE INFORMATION THAT LEAD TO THE ATTACK ON THE INSURGENT CAMP.

9. EVEN SO, THE PROVINCIAL POLICE CHIEF HAS ADVISED THE
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CONSULATE STAFF NOT TO TRAVEL IN THE MAE CHAM DISTRICT FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS UNTIL THINGS HAVE A CHANCE TO SETTLE DOWN.

10. MAE CHAM IS THE AREA TARGETED FOR A HIGHLAND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT THAT MAY RECEIVE U.S. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. WHILE ANY FUTURE PLANNING FOR SUCH ASSISTANCE MUST NOW RECOGNIZE A POTENTIAL SECURITY PROBLEM IN THE AREA, I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE THREAT IN MAE CHAM IS SUFFICIENTLY DANGEROUS TO FORCE ANY CHANGE IN ONGOING U.S. PLANNING. AT THE SAME TIME, ANY AMERICANS TRAVELING INTO THE MAE CHAM AREA SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL DANGER AND SHOULD CHECK OUT TRAVEL PLANS WITH APPROPRIATE THAI SECURITY OFFICIALS.

TANNER

UNQUOTE

WHITEHOUSE

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